

Ponte Vedra NewsLine

JULY 2023 Volume 10 Issue 7

Ponte Vedra, Palm Valley, Nocatee and South Ponte Vedra Beach

A Florida NewsLine Publication



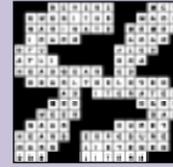
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Photo courtesy Trevor Gibbs

Trevor Gibbs was the guest speaker at the Coastal Friends' June luncheon.

Meteorologist talks hurricanes at Coastal Friends' luncheon

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Trevor Gibbs, meteorologist from Action News Jax First Alert Weather, was the guest speaker at the June 7 Coastal Friends luncheon held at Marsh Landing Country Club. Gibbs, who joined the Action News Jax team in October 2022, presented a PowerPoint slide show to the many attendees about hurricane preparedness, hurricane history, and tips for staying safe during the hurricane season which started June 1.

Gibbs graduated from College of Charleston in South Carolina with

Coastal Friends cont. on pg. 2

Safety around water: Experts share tips, important reminders

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

All it takes is one moment of distraction.

"A child or a weak swimmer can drown in the time it takes to reply to a text, check a fishing line or apply sunscreen. Death and injury from drownings happen every day in home pools, and hot tubs, at the beach or in oceans, lakes, rivers and streams, bathtubs and even buckets," said Amber Bierfreund, American Red Cross Regional Communications Director.

This, she said, is what makes water competency so crucial, especially during the summer season.

"The Red Cross believes that by working together to improve water competency — which includes swimming skills, water smarts and helping others — water activities can be safer and just as much fun," said Bierfreund. "Ensure every member of your family learns to swim so they at least achieve skills of water competency: able to enter the water, get a



Photos courtesy Tiffany Merlo Phelps

Brown Family Y Aquatics Coordinator Morgan Taylor showing swimming techniques to children in a group swim lesson at Brown Family YMCA.

breath, stay afloat, change position, swim a distance then get out of the water safely."

Megan Hansson, who is the St. Johns County Aquatics Director for the St. Augustine Family YMCA, agreed. She

oversees the YMCA, the Solomon Calhoun Community Center and the Willie Galimore Recreation Center pools. She leads water safety classes throughout the YMCA of Florida's First Coast, and she is also an ocean rescue lifeguard and certified EMT.

Drowning, she said, is the leading cause of death in children aged one through four, and the second leading cause of death in children aged five through 14. Yet, it is the one thing that parents think will never happen to them.

"There are so many distractions now. Who is watching? It is very scary how quickly it can happen. Parents think that it can never happen to them," she said. "It can."

At the Y, swim lessons begin at six months old and continue up to age 99. Safety skills are taught for all bodies of water, including pools, oceans, lakes and rivers. "Reach,



American Red Cross swim lesson underway.

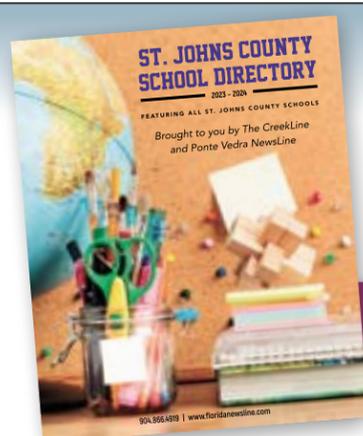
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Swim Instructor Leah Ware teaching preschool swim lessons at the Brown Family YMCA.

Water safety cont. on pg. 2

throw and don't go" is one safety rule that Hansson teaches, meaning that it is okay to reach for someone or to throw a flotation device, but do not jump in to save a friend. On a boat, always wear a flotation device, she said.

Hansson said swim lessons are divided by age group beginning with a parent/child class for ages six months to 36 months, an opportunity to get acclimated to the water and to learn what to do if in trouble. Next up is the preschool age classes from three to five years old where the basic strokes are taught. Finally, classes are offered for five to 12-year-olds with multiple strokes being introduced.

According to Hansson, the number one rule is to never swim alone; always swim with a buddy. The second is to assign a "water watcher" and, when in the ocean, always swim near a lifeguard and be aware of the flags and their corresponding meanings.

Charles Bond, Volunteer Life Savings Corps Member in Jacksonville Beach, said when it comes to having a safe day at the beach, he has two main rules. The first is to swim in front of a lifeguard and the second is to

stay waist deep or less in the water to maintain stability.

"Many people do not understand the ocean very well. It is not a pool," said Bond, who has been a lifeguard for 25 years. "It may look like you are in a safe spot, but it can be a false sense of security especially when it comes to rip currents."

Also, when it comes to trying to rescue someone who is in distress in the ocean, a person should be aware of their own abilities and limitations and always initiate a 911 response before doing anything else, he said.

"If you are not trained, you will risk losing your own life to save someone else," he said.

Finally, always watch children in the water closely, he said. "If your kid's foot touches water, you have to have eyes on your child."

[Author's Note: For more information on swim classes at the Brown Family YMCA, call (904) 543-9622. For more information about free online water safety classes, go to redcross.org. Also, there are several free American Red Cross apps, "Red Cross Swim" and "Red Cross First Aid" available.]



Swim Instructor Leah Ware teaching preschool swim lesson at the Brown Family YMCA.

Coastal Friends cont. from pg. 1

degrees in meteorology and physics and a minor in communications. After graduating college, he spent some time in the Hudson Valley of New York providing forecasts and routes for ships across the globe. In 2020, he returned south and was a meteorologist for WFXG in Atlanta, Georgia for their five-hour morning show. In his free time, Gibbs is an avid practitioner of yoga and became a certified yoga teacher in college. He finds yoga an exceptional way to counteract the high demands life can have.

Formed in 1998, Coastal Friends is a social group of women who live in Ponte Vedra Beach, Nocatee, Jacksonville, Jacksonville Beach, Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, St. Augustine and the surrounding area. Some of the activities offered are adventures and outings, book club, bunco, canasta, happy hour, lunch in, lunch out, Mah Jongg, monthly luncheons and wine socials. New members are welcome throughout the year. Contact brookmeister@msn.com for more information on membership or to get details about the club.

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BFF Best Furry Friend of the month

Meet Jack (Rolex)!



Breed: Pomsky
Favorite Activity: Stealing socks
Favorite Treat: Chicken wrapped bananas
Favorite Friend: His 11 year old Pomeranian brother, Sammy
How your BFF got his name: Rolex is the name given by the breeder (all of the puppies in that litter were named after watches) but it was hard to say so we made it his middle name. Jack is his grandfather's name.

Do you have a cute pet? Send us your pet's picture and the answer to the five questions above before the 10th of the month. Also tell us you saw the BFF contest in Ponte Vedra NewsLine. Your pet could be our BFF of the month and appear in Ponte Vedra NewsLine! Email editor@floridanewslines.com to enter your pet.

Happy 4th of July!
from your friends at
Ponte Vedra NewsLine

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MYSTERY PHOTO

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Last month's Mystery Photo was the statue of Ponce de Leon located in the north beach access parking lot of Guana River Preserve.

Answers Puzzles PG 10

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July

Community Calendar What's Happening in Ponte Vedra

Council on Aging offers interest groups at the COA Center at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee. Meetings are free and self-guided except for the Caregiver's Support Group. Advance registration for clubs and meetings is required; email pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com or call (904) 819-3234. Tuesday clubs include: Caregiver Support Group, 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.; and Widows and Widowers social group, second and fourth Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Wednesday groups include: Mah Jongg Meet-up, 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.; and Genealogy Group, 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Palm Valley Market is held inside the Palm Valley Community Center at 148 Canal Road, every Tuesday from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more. Visit the Palm Valley Market Facebook page for more information.

6th: Bingo will be held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, on Thursdays from 1 p.m. – 2 p.m. for four weeks beginning Thursday, July 6. Contact Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information and to register.

6th: Free Tech Help with David will be held on Thursday, July 6 from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Drop in for tech assistance with your Android, Apple, and Reader devices; no RSVPs required. Visit sjcpls.org/branches/ponte-vedra-beach-branch/ for more information.

7th: The GTM Research Reserve will hold a new volunteer orientation on July 7 from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Learn about volunteer rules and responsibility as well next steps to volunteering. Complete the volunteer

application online (www.gtmnerr.org) before attending. Contact Abigail Kuhn at Abigail.Kuhn@FloridaDEP.gov to assure that your application was received.

8th: Wellness and Family Fun Days at Sawgrass Village will be held every Saturday in July from 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Hosted by Mind Body Social, all events are free and open to the community. Events include wellness classes such as yoga and barre as well as music, lawn games, face painting, a photobooth and raffled prizes, all held on the lawn in front of ABC Liquors. Visit <https://mbs.events/sv/> for more information and to register.

10th: The St. Johns County Civic Roundtable will meet on Monday, July 10 at 12 p.m. at St. Augustine Waterworks building, 184 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine. An Education Update featuring Superintendent Tim Forson will be presented, including schools, teachers, and students. Email info@sjcroundtable.org to register for the meeting or visit www.sjcroundtable.org for more information.

11th: Chair exercise will be held for three weeks on Tuesdays, beginning July 11, from 9:30 a.m. – 10 a.m. at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

14th: Literary Movie Matinee for Adults: "Death on the Nile" (2022, rated PG-13) will be shown on July 14 from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. This event is sponsored by the Friends of the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Call the library at (904) 827-6950 for more information.

15th: The Nocatee Farmers Market: Islands Experience will be held on Saturday, July 15 from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Nocatee Station Field. The Farmers Market is open to the public.

17th: Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will meet on Monday, July 17 at 5:30 p.m. for Chat & Chew before the 6 p.m. meeting at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Road. Featured speaker Rachael Grage from the Democratic Women's Club will present a wrap-up of Tallahassee's 2023 bills. Email ed.warren152@gmail.com for more information.

18th: Ponte Vedra Woman's Club Summer Social will be held on July 18 at the Refinery in Jacksonville Beach, 831 1st Street North from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Initial appetizers will be provided; other food and drinks are "on your own." Bring a friend and enjoy social time with club members. There is no cost to attend, but register online at www.pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php.

19th: Teen Trivia and Pizza Night will be held at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library from 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m. on July 19. RSVP is highly recommended as space is limited. Contact Joan Meyers at jmeyers@sjcfl.us or (904) 827-6950 for more information.

22nd: GTM Research Reserve will host its monthly Beach Cleanup on Saturday, July 22 from 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. No registration is required; meet at the Visitor Center, 505 Guana River Road in Ponte Vedra Beach where gloves and trash bags will be provided. Visit gtmnerr.org for more information.

25th: Community Hospice debunks common myths on

Tuesday, July 25 at 11 a.m. at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Learn about hospice care as holistic, supporting the needs of the patient and the family. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

26th: Building Quick, Nutritious and Delicious Smoothies, featuring registered dietitian Carla Powell, will be held at Flagler Health+ at Nocatee on July 26 from 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. Contact pbrunell@Stjohnscoa.com or call (904) 819-3234 for more information.

27th: Monthly Birthday Bash at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center, 175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach. Enjoy birthday cake and the music of Lou Parisi as July birthdays are celebrated on Thursday, July 27 from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Call Suzanne Duvall at (904) 209-3659 for more information.

29th: The Ponte Vedra Writers Group will meet on Saturday, July 29 at 11 a.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Florida Book Award winner Jennifer Swanson, author of more than 50 books focusing on science and technology for children, will discuss "Building An Effective Platform and Brand for Authors." The meeting is free and open to members and non-members alike. Visit www.floridawriters.org for more information.

29th: The Northeast Florida Chapter of Sisters in Crime will meet on July 29 at 1 p.m. in the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. (FOL Room). Sarah Bewley, infrastructure security consultant and author of "Burning Eden," will be the guest speaker. Bring your coffee and bring a friend. Visit www.nefloridasistersincrime.org for more

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with St. Johns County School Board Member Kelly Barrera, District 4

Q: Can you share information about volunteer opportunities in the district?

A: Volunteers are so important to our school district. They make a big difference in the lives of students and teachers. There are ongoing volunteer opportunities as well as special event needs. Some volunteers work with the same teacher year after year. At the elementary school level, volunteers can read to children or listen to them read, make props for plays and help at recess among many other possibilities. At the secondary level, we always need speakers about careers, assistance in the office or school clinic, and proctors for standardized tests. The need for volunteers is great and we will work with you to find opportunities at a nearby school. Orientation for new school district volunteers will be held Tuesday, Aug. 8, from 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. at the Fullerwood Center Auditorium, 10 Hildreth Drive in St. Augustine. Information will be shared regarding the basics of school support through academic tutoring, mentoring, and other areas of need. Call (904) 547-3952 or email Cheryl.Freeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us for more information or to reserve your spot.

Q: What can you tell us about the district's energy conservation efforts?

A: The district is a good steward of energy. We received the quarterly energy conservation status report at our last school board meeting. Nease High School has reduced energy consumption and avoided \$133,000 in energy costs, the highest in the district. In total, the district reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 3,625 metric tons, which is the equivalent to 755 passenger cars not being driven for a year. Also, between January and March 2023, the district saved a total of \$1.4 million in cost avoidance as compared to the 2008 baseline (with adjustments

for the current time).

Q: Can you shed some light on the district's upcoming five-year strategic plan?

A: In June, there were several meetings between a group of community stakeholders, teachers, parents, and even some students to work on our strategic plan. They utilized data from surveys and interviews gathered as a result of our accreditation process and identified as some of the initiatives: individualized student support; student learning and growth; retention and recruitment of high quality teachers and staff; technology now and in the future (to include AI); and communication. I'm looking forward to having this process completed and presented at an upcoming board meeting.

Q: Is it too early to register students for next school year?

A: Please register your children, especially incoming kindergarteners, for school as soon as possible. This goes especially for new families who are moving into the area over the summer. Registration may be done at their local school, and most of the paperwork is done online. There is an address locator on our main website (www.stjohns.k12.fl.us) that will let residents know exactly which schools their home is zoned for. We encourage parents to register as soon as they can.

Q: Do you have anything else to share with District 4?

A: We were very grateful to ratify the teacher contract for this past school year at our June school board meeting. We continue to hire high quality teachers for our growing school district.

Q: How can our readers contact you?

A: They can email me at kelly.barrera@stjohns.k12.fl.us or call me at (904) 547-7510.



with St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller Brandon Patty

Q: What is the Clerk and Comptroller's role in handling county government's finances?

A: Our office is essentially the county's accountant, internal auditor, and custodian of funds. We manage its investments, handle payroll, pay its bills, internal auditing, and prepare the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

Q: Can you describe the CAFR further?

A: The CAFR is a detailed financial report published at the end of each fiscal year detailing St. Johns County's revenue and spending. It contains financial information including statements of net assets, the balances of county funds, debt information, and more. The report is presented in three sections: introductory, financial, and statistical. It includes basic financial statements as well as the independent auditors' report.

Q: What is the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR) and where can residents review the latest one?

A: The PAFR summarizes the 400-page CAFR and uses terms that allow residents to understand the county's financial position. It features highlights from the comprehensive report and is designed to be straightforward and user-friendly for taxpayers without a

background in public finance. To read the PAFR, please visit our website. We will publish a PAFR this fall for Fiscal Year 2022 to show how tax dollars are collected and spent, as well as more recent trends on demographics, housing, taxes, and more.

Q: Has your office received any recognition for this work?

A: The comptroller's office publishes two reports annually: the CAFR and the PAFR. In June, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded our office a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for each of the reports published for Fiscal Year 2021. This is the 30th consecutive year the St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller has received the award for the CAFR — the gold standard for reporting, transparency, and disclosure about the county's finances. The PAFR has only been published twice and following each submission, the GFOA has presented the office with this award.

Q: What is the best way for residents to contact you?

A: Residents can call my office at (904) 819-3601 or my cell at (904) 599-8688. My email address is BPatty@stjohnsclerk.com. A lot of questions can be answered by visiting our website, www.stjohnsclerk.com.

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with St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick

Q: Can you share some information about the recent appropriation received from the state for the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Police Athletic League?

A: The Police Athletic League (PAL) is its own 501 c 3 non profit that operates with its own board of directors. Funding for PAL is very restricted and it basically has to be self-funded. A long time dream of mine is to have a PAL complex to better be able to offer more athletics and classes with a goal of giving underserved kids a safe space to go after school and during the summer. I took my vision to our Florida legislative delegation, Rep. Stevenson, Rep. Renner and Sen. Hudson, and made a proposal for funds for field space and office space. They agreed with me and were able to get funds added to the state budget. We submitted a request for \$5.9 million for the governor and I am so pleased that he signed off on the request last week.

Q: What does your vision for this facility include?

A: Last year, we moved PAL to a 35-acre site off Allen Nease Road in the southwest part of the county. We funded some portables with a goal to hold fundraising campaigns to improve the project. With the appropriation we just received from the state, we can proceed with the first two phases of the project, which will include one to two artificial turf fields surrounded by a track, parking, and an office/classroom building built to Category 4 hurricane specifications with an indoor basketball court and boxing ring. Within the building, we will be able to expand our PAL offerings to include after school educational classes, Character Counts! clubs, a leadership council, PAL band, and a fishing club. Outside, we will offer track and field, walking and running clubs, tackle and flag football, cheer, our Police Explorer program and numerous summer camps. The idea is to

offer youth options other than just going home after school and doing nothing.

Q: When do you anticipate beginning construction and then opening the complex?

A: We are already undertaking some pro bono work with some of our partners, and hopefully construction will begin by the end of the year. It should take two years to complete the first two phases and we are hopeful that once we show the community the progress being made, it will inspire donations for phase three, which would include a special needs baseball field (similar to Field of Dreams in the Northwest), traditional baseball fields and additional field space.

Q: Can you give us some background on PAL and why it is so important to you?

A: PAL is very personal to me. I coached my own sons in this league when they were young. PAL serves a population of approximately 50,000 youth in the county under the age of 18; about 2,500 of these youth participate in PAL programs throughout the year. Approximately 20,000 people in all of St. Johns County fall below the poverty level and 40 percent of them live in the southwest part of the county, right where our complex will be located. We do welcome kids from all over the county. Those who don't qualify for free and reduced lunch pay \$150 per sport to participate as compared to an average of \$350 for other leagues. One hundred percent of what we take in goes into our programs.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you with any questions or suggestions about this article?

A: They can email me at sheriff@sjsso.org or call me at (904) 824-8304. Also, our website, www.sjsso.org has a wealth of resources, from alarm registration to Crime Stoppers to our Neighbors app.



with St. Johns County Property Appraiser Eddie Creamer

Q: Does Florida offer an exemption for first responders?

A: Yes. As with all exemptions, the deadline to file is March 1. The totally and permanently disabled first responder exemption makes a homesteaded property totally exempt from ad valorem taxation. The first responder must be totally and permanently disabled as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty to be eligible.

Q: What proof is required for this exemption?

A: Required are an employer's certificate of disability, certificate of permanent and total disability from the Social Security Administration, and a Florida physician's certificate of total and permanent disability. Since this exemption applies only to homesteaded property, Florida residency is also required.

Q: Is this exemption available to a surviving spouse?

A: Yes, an unmarried surviving spouse of a qualifying first responder is also eligible.

Q: Is this exemption available to totally and permanently disabled first responders from out of state?

A: We get a lot of questions on this and while legislation has been introduced, it hasn't become law. This exemption does not extend to first responders who are totally and permanently disabled as a result of service at out of state agencies.

We are happy to discuss the details with first responders who think they might be eligible. I invite them to call our office.

Q: What is the best way for our readers to contact you?

A: Our office is located at 4030 Lewis Speedway Ste. 203, (904) 827-5500. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Also, readers can email me at Eddie@sjcpa.us or call me at (904) 827-5500.

Guest Column

New election bills explained

By St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Vicky Oakes

Several election related bills were passed by the State legislature this year and have been signed into law. Senate Bill 7050 was the largest: a 96-page bill that takes effect July 1 increasing the security of vote-by-mail ballots, making changes to enhance the accuracy of Florida's voter rolls, and improving access to reports and data to boost voter confidence.

Voters voting by mail will soon be required to make their vote-by-mail requests on a uniform statewide application form. This form is not yet available, but must be completed by the Florida Division of Elections by Oct. 1, 2023. All requests made after the 2022 General Election through Oct. 1, 2023, are valid, and voters do not need to re-request their 2024 vote-by-mail ballots if they have done so already. As a reminder, all vote-by-mail requests expired following the November 2022 election, and requests are now required to be made for each election cycle. If you intend to vote-by-mail in the upcoming 2024 elections and have not made a request for your ballot, now would be a great time.

Vote-by-mail ballots will now be printed with "Do Not Forward" on the mailing envelope, and in the circumstance that two or more ballots are returned in the same vote-by-mail envelope to the Supervisor of Elections Office, neither will be counted. Please make sure you are requesting your ballot to be mailed to the correct address and be careful when completing and mailing your ballots back if multiple household members are also voting by mail.

Senate Bill 7050 has made great improvements to our list maintenance processes. The law has increased and

regulated the frequency in which other government agencies such as the Department of Health, Clerk of Courts, Department of Highway and Motor Vehicles, Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Commission on Offender Review, and Department of Corrections to report to the Department of State and Supervisor of Elections weekly with information on persons who may not be included in the voter rolls due to death, adjudication of mental incapacity, felony conviction, or lack of U.S. citizenship.

Prior to Senate Bill 7050, the Supervisor of Elections was required to conduct list maintenance to ensure accurate and current voter registration records at minimum once each year, completed no later than 90 days prior to the date of any federal election. SB 7050 now requires each annual list maintenance program to begin by April 1. Supervisors must also conduct an annual review of voter registration records to identify any in which a voter may be registered at an address that may not be a legal residence address, and initiate list maintenance for such records.

Additionally, two bills regarding School Board members were passed and have been signed into law. HB477 limits the term of School Board members to eight years. HJR31 places a question on the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election ballot to amend the Florida constitution to change School Board members from nonpartisan to partisan election. Voters, this one is for you to decide! For more information on legislation passed this year, visit www.flsenate.gov.

For voter registration or election information call (904) 823-2238 or visit www.votesjc.gov.



2024 ELECTION DATES
PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE
PRIMARY ELECTION
MARCH 19, 2024
PRIMARY ELECTION
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ST. JOHNS Business Monthly

Business Briefs

Florida SBDC staff recognized at annual Regional Performance Awards

Every year the Florida SBDC Network presents its Performance Excellence Awards. This is an opportunity to recognize and demonstrate appreciation to network personnel, students, volunteers, partners, centers, and legislators who contribute to the success of the FSBDC mission-to help Florida businesses succeed and create positive impact for our economy.

This year, the Regional Performance Excellence of the Year Award was earned by Marge Cirillo, consultant for St. Johns County. This award recognizes one consultant from each SBDC region for their demonstrated commitment to performance excellence demonstrated by their contribution to customer growth and success.

SCORE announces July events

SCORE is a national service organization that supports small businesses nationwide. SCORE has a network of more than 11,000 volunteers operating in more than 340 local chapters around the country. The organization is supported by the US Small Business Administration (SBA).

• **Starting Your New Business**, a workshop designed to guide attendees through the steps necessary for starting a business, will be held on July 15 from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. The workshop will cover the different legal business entities, licenses needed, taxes, and insurance. Learn how to write a business plan, collect business information and perform business research. Discover more about capital funding and the lender's view of the borrower. There is no charge for this virtual workshop. Visit www.score.org/jacksonville/local-workshops to register.

• **Marketing Your Business**, for people who want to engage customers and grow their business, whether they offer a product, service, or both, will be held on July 19 from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Attendees will learn various marketing strategies and practical tips. After this workshop, attendees will clearly analyze their situation, define their mission, conduct market research, identify their target market, and develop a unique marketing mix for their business. There is no charge for this virtual workshop. Visit www.score.org/jacksonville/local-workshops to register.

Visit www.jacksonville.score.org for more information

Florida SBDC urges preparation for hurricane season

The Florida SBDC Network, the state's principal provider of small business assistance, urges small businesses to continue to prepare for the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season, which extends through Nov. 30.

According to a forecast by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season is predicted to be near-normal, with 12 to 17 total named storms. Of those, five to nine could become hurricanes, including one to four major hurricanes. The Florida SBDC Network encourages businesses, regardless

of how much activity is predicted, to develop and review their disaster preparedness plan and make necessary preparations for the season.

Businesses should consider several elements in preparing for a disaster. Not only is it important to protect staff, their building, data, and inventory, it is also critical to prepare a plan to continue operations following the disaster. A good plan may include provisions to relocate to a pre-identified site, retrieve data, including employee, customer and vendor records; and a way to operate efficiently with a smaller staff of key individuals.

In the event of a disaster, Florida SBDC disaster specialists help

Business Briefs cont. on pg. 11

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15 YEARS

Briefs

Holiday weekend beach shuttles available

The Fourth of July weekend is one of the busiest holiday weekends on St. Johns County's beaches. St. Johns County Beach Services offers two free shuttles to reduce traffic congestion:

St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier shuttle, from St. Augustine Beach City Hall, 2200 A1A South, to Fishing Pier parking lot

July 1 through July 4, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park shuttle, from Cornerstone Park, 1046 A1A North, to Mickler's parking lot

July 1 through July 4, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Visit www.sjcf.us/beaches or call (904) 209-0331 for more information regarding St. Johns County beaches.

Snacks to be provided for students with food insecurities

Beginning with the 2023 – 24 academic year, St. Johns CARES will regularly supply snacks to a St. Johns County school with a high concentration of students with food insecurities. Studies have shown that children and teens need to eat every three to four hours, making snacks an important part of their day. Snacks can help improve students' school engagement, sense of belonging, equality among students, improvement in attendance and retention.

Community assistance will be needed to help supply the snacks. Donations from individuals, work groups and other organizations and neighborhood drives will be needed to make this program successful.

Contact president@stjohnscares.org if your group or organization is interested in donating snacks on a one time or ongoing basis.

St. Johns County's 2023 Hurricane Preparedness Guide now available

The 2023 Atlantic hurricane season is underway, running through Nov. 30. St. Johns County Emergency Management's 2023 Hurricane Preparedness Guide and other preparedness materials are available to the public at www.sjcemergencymanagement.com/pdf/SJC-Hurricane-Preparedness-Guide.pdf. Printed copies of the guide are also available for free at St. Johns County Public Library System branches.

Residents are encouraged to sign up for emergency notifications at www.alertstjohns.com, which enables St. Johns County to provide residents with critical information in a variety of emergency situations, such as severe weather, unexpected road closures, water advisories, missing persons, evacuations of buildings or neighborhoods, and incidents that may pose a threat to public safety. By signing up, residents can choose to receive time-sensitive messages via phone call, text message, or email.

"Do not wait until a storm approaches our area," said Dr. Joseph Giammanco, St. Johns County Emergency Management Director. "Today is the day to get prepared."

Residents are also encouraged to take advantage of the next Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, which runs from Aug. 26 through Sept. 8. Many vital supplies (such as batteries, generators, soaps, trash bags, and more) are tax-free during these time periods. Visit www.floridarevenue.com/disasterprep for a full list of tax-free items. Visit www.floridadisaster.org/kit for a complete disaster supply kit checklist.

Clerk's Office launches Volunteer Clerk Ambassador Program

The St. Johns County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller has announced its new Volunteer Clerk Am-

bassador Program. The program allows residents to become actively involved in local government by providing those seeking clerk services with assistance by serving as administrative and informational liaisons.

The Clerk Ambassador Program allows volunteers to fill vital roles and contribute to the success of the organization. Volunteers may perform duties such as greeting those entering the judicial complex, assisting with wayfinding, and serving as support during high-volume operations.

"Government can be difficult to navigate and St. Johns County residents deserve a harmonious experience when obtaining services offered within the judicial complex," said Brandon J. Patty, Clerk of Courts and County Comptroller. "I am thrilled to welcome Clerk Ambassadors to serve alongside our dedicated group of deputy clerks fulfilling the office's role in county government."

The Clerk's Office is seeking customer-service-oriented ambassadors with flexible schedules and previous professional experience. All applicants will be screened for qualifications. Candidates whose applications match the volunteer requirements will be contacted for interviews and other pre-selection processes. To learn more about the program and apply, call (904) 819-3605.

Save water and money – watch the weather, wait to water this summer

Summer afternoon showers and tropical rainfall mean that Mother Nature may be able to handle much of your lawn sprinkling over the next few months, saving water and your money. That's why the St. Johns River Water Management District's summertime water conservation message is "Watch the weather. Wait to water."

Florida's rainy season extends from May

through October, typically accounting for up to 70 percent of our annual rainfall totals. The period from June to September includes the wettest months, with most rainfall monitoring stations in the District typically receiving five to seven inches of rain during each of these months, compared to two to three-and-a-half inches in the winter and spring.

It is important to note that in most years, there is a slight difference between inland stations — for instance, Orlando and Gainesville — where the wettest month occurs early in the season, in either June or July. At coastal stations, such as Daytona Beach and Vero Beach, the wettest month usually comes later in September or October, when the impact of heavy rains from tropical activity are more frequent.

Since these are average patterns, it is best to pay attention to your local conditions — watch the weather, wait to water.

Here are some tips for taking advantage of Florida's summer rains:

- Check your forecast to see if rain is on the way. A weather app is an easy and convenient way to stay up to date.
- Use a rain gauge to determine how much rain your yard has gotten. During June through September, yards need no more than one-half to three-quarters of an inch of water every two to three days.
- If you use an irrigation system, know your watering days. District watering restrictions allow enough water to maintain healthy landscapes year-round. The mandatory restrictions specify the hours when watering may occur, the amount of water that may be applied, and the days when watering may occur for residential and nonresidential locations. Visit www.sjrwmd.com/wateringrestrictions to learn your days.

Briefs cont. on pg. 10

YOU'LL HAVE IT MADE IN THE SHADE THIS SUMMER



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Get to Know ...

By Tiffany Merlo Phelps
mail@floridanewsline.com

Gavin Walker

Gavin Walker has always liked flamingos — something about them just looked cool to him as a child. As a teenager, Gavin saw a business opportunity. During the pandemic, he noticed a neighbor who decorated a friend's yard with plastic flamingos to celebrate a birthday, a practice also known as "flocking." Walker first checked with his neighbor who had done the flocking to make sure she approved of his business plan. She did, and she gave him 10 flamingos to get started. "Flocking Flamingos PVB" was born. "I thought, 'Since no one can have birthdays, bring the birthday to them,'" said Gavin, 17. He now has 130 flamingos and has been setting up birthday, get well, and graduation flockings for three years. He has placed as many as 100 flamingos at one time. In addition, he has signs to accompany the flamingos that he can personalize with advance notice. Gavin's sister, Sydney, 14, has joined the business so she can take over once Gavin, a rising senior at Ponte Vedra High, goes to college in a year. Gavin said it has been a family affair from the start as he places the flamingos the night before a special event with his father, Scott Walker, who is the Vice President of Information Technology at Dream Finders Homes. His mom, Jennifer Walker, Simple Beach



Photo courtesy Jennifer Walker
Gavin Walker and his sister Sydney.

Living and JW Organizers owner, manages the business calendar. Gavin, an Eagle Scout, also works at the Sawgrass Publix as a cashier. In all of his roles, Gavin said he enjoys interacting with people in the community the most.

Q: Who was your first customer and what has changed since your first flocking?

A: My first customer was a school friend, and I was so afraid that we would get caught. We always let

someone in the house know, but I was still worried. We set up 35 flamingos which is still our standard set-up amount unless someone wants more. We are much more organized now. We have learned from every flocking and have built on that experience.

Q: What have you learned from this business?

A: It has made me learn the value of a dollar. If I want to make more money, then I need to book more flockings.

It has increased my work ethic. There are times when I do not want to do it, and I just have to say to myself, "Tough. This is your business, and you booked it."

Q: What was your service project to become an Eagle Scout?

A: I built six dog houses for Animal Care Protective Services of Jacksonville. I raised \$1,100 to do so, and some supplies were donated by Lowe's and Home Depot.

Q: You are also involved with "Letters to Legends" at Ponte Vedra High. Share more about this.

A: My friend Ahan Soni came up with the idea and the creation of this for NHS to have students write letters to senior citizens and then deliver the letters throughout the year for certain holidays. I was brought into the project close to the beginning, and we eventually turned it into a non-profit.

We collect and deliver letters to Vicar's Landing, Cathedral Care, and Taylor Manor. We begin by providing donated cards for students to fill out in the courtyard at school. After we collect the cards, we attach a flower to each card and then deliver the cards to the assisted living facilities.

Q: What are your college plans?

A: I would like to attend the University of Florida and earn a degree in business. I think that I want to go into some aspect of computers. It has always been my thing because of my dad. In fact, my dad and I built my computer in my room.

Get to Know ...

Interested in being featured? Email Martie Thompson at editor@FloridaNewsLine.com

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Back to School Guide

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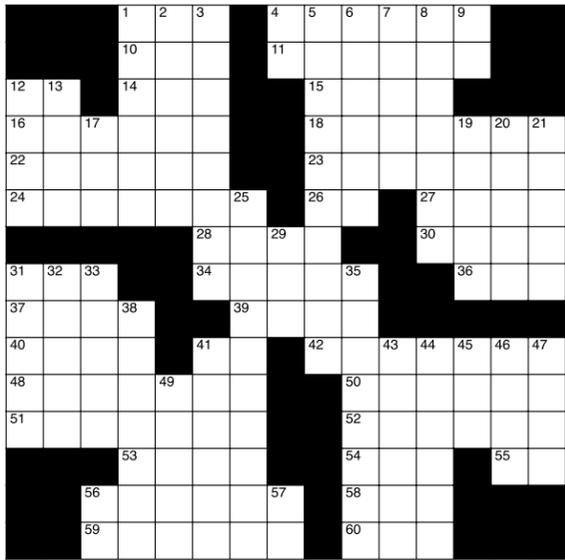
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Puzzles

Answers on page 3
Provided by MetroCreative



CLUES ACROSS

1. Small Eurasian deer
4. Irish county
10. A major division of geological time
11. Broadway actor Lane
12. Canadian province
14. It causes fainting (abbr.)
15. Two
16. A notable one is blue
18. Utter repeatedly
22. Rings
23. Sullies
24. Occurs
26. Publicity
27. Near
28. Tools of a trade
30. Offer in good faith
31. "American Idol" network

34. Garments
36. Soviet Socialist Republic
37. Retired NFL DC Dean
39. Hot meal
40. A type of gin
41. Percussion instrument
42. A \$10 bill
48. About ground
50. Medicine man
51. Seedless raisin
52. National capital of Albania
53. Appendage
54. OJ trial judge
55. By the way
56. Bicycle parts
58. Barbie's friend
59. In a way, stretched
60. Commercials

CLUES DOWN

1. Make up for
2. American songbird
3. Pay
4. International organization
5. Engravers
6. Declared as fact
7. Criminal
8. Jewelry
9. Hospital worker (abbr.)
12. Nonsense (slang)
13. Town in Galilee
17. Value
19. Another name
20. Sheep in second year before shearing
21. Town in Surrey, England
25. Appropriate during a time of year
29. Creative output
31. Recesses
32. District in N. Germany
33. Rider of Rohan
35. The official emblem of the German Third Reich
38. One who puts down roots
41. Scribe
43. Painted a bright color
44. Tycoons
45. Actress Thurman
46. Walking accessory
47. Crest of a hill
49. Member of a North American people
56. Type of computer
57. U.S. State (abbr.)

STAR SPANGLED WORD SEARCH

A N S T E K C O R G A R P U B B P L F L
 C D P L M B U G D E L G N A P S Y U D U
 O M Y I T A P E S S S B G O P N R C K
 G D K W F C O F T Y U S P S O I L A R R
 T P A R F K O T N A W M T Y T F G T N N
 S S C F T Y L F W I R T M E A P G S N G
 S B E G K A N K O I I B D E C D U K A H
 U H U T D R E E C O N W E M R U I T R K
 O A U I S D N E W R D W P L L H L W O
 P I N C R I C G Y O E U D O E E S A O S
 R L W F D R N P T R P T B D R C E T T H
 E M O T E I U R D E E U R I Y K S S D S
 G F Y A L L E A N E N K N U L W E Y D C
 R L M L H S C I G D D G E E F U R O K P
 U M I Y S T H I F A E L H E G K M Y H G
 B R K E W S A S E N N G T T S O N C E I
 G I D B N U G G W O C A C I R E M A Y E
 P F A U L W A S S M E C A S M U F R R N
 O M S L E L W W T E U T B W U G O Y A F
 H B S I F R B G L L A N D D Y U R F B W

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

- AMERICA
- BACKYARD
- BURGER
- CELEBRATE
- DESSERT
- FLAG
- FOURTH
- FRANKFURTER
- GATHERING
- GRILLING
- GUESTS
- HOLIDAY
- ICE CREAM
- INDEPENDENCE
- LEMONADE
- POOL
- ROCKETS
- SKY
- SPANGLED
- STAR
- SUMMER
- SUNSHINE
- UNITED
- WARM



CRYPTO FUN

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to Independence Day. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 14 = E)

- A.** 10 26 11 14 3 14 26 11 14 26 19 14
Clue: Freedom from control
- B.** 13 10 24 14 7 5 24 15 8
Clue: Pyrotechnics
- C.** 19 14 17 14 2 24 25 23 10 5 26
Clue: Party
- D.** 20 10 19 23 5 24 1
Clue: Defeating an opponent

Briefs cont. from pg. 8

- You can use the "catch can" method to determine how much water to apply to your landscape and to see if you are watering uniformly.
- Make sure your gutter downspouts are directed into landscaped areas or lawn. Consider installing a rain barrel to capture excess rainwater.
- Decrease watering time during cool or humid conditions and skip a scheduled watering after a moderate rainfall.

• Check to see if your rain sensor is working and the controller is not in bypass mode — that way, your system won't run if there has been recent rain. Many people aren't aware that rain sensors are required on all automatic irrigation systems.

Visit the Water Less campaign online at www.WaterLessFlorida.com for more information.

Local Audubon chapter expands to eastern Putnam County

The St. Johns County Audubon Society

has expanded its geographic reach into a portion of eastern Putnam County and changed its name to St. Johns Regional Audubon to reflect the expansion.

"We are so delighted about this expansion. It will allow us to serve the local

communities in eastern Putnam County not currently part of an Audubon Chapter, while giving us additional opportunities to introduce our current members to new birding areas and other birders," said the chapter's president, Amy Koch.

The areas affected include East Palatka

south to Volusia County line, including Crescent City, Georgetown, and Welaka. Since chapters are organized by zip code, St. Johns Regional Audubon now includes the additional zip codes: 32187, 32189, 32181, 32193, 32112, and 32139.

Established in 1979, St. Johns Regional Audubon offers bird walks and field trips from September through May.

Contact Amy Koch at president@stjohnsaudubon.com or (904) 770-5484 for more information.

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PopHistory
By Scott A. Grant, mail@floridanewsline.com

Wonder Wood by the Sea

In 1914, Elizabeth Worthington Philip Stark, a wealthy socialite from New York, bought 350 acres of wild land along the St. Johns River overlooking Ribault Bay, near Mayport. She set out to build her own paradise. She called her new resort Wonder Wood by the Sea. It would include a sumptuous home she dubbed Miramar, a 1000-foot-long fishing pier, the Ribault Hotel, a riding stable, and other outbuildings.

Wonder Wood became a playground for the rich and famous, thanks in part to Elizabeth Stark's famous brother, an important US diplomat and former Rough Rider with Teddy Roosevelt. In 1940, the US Government took most of her land to be used as a Naval base. They paid Stark a fraction of what the land was worth. Eminent domain can be cruel.

But, in 1917, Elizabeth Stark was still at the height of her wealth and power. She founded one of the first Girl Scout troops in Florida and used them to patrol the beaches looking for Germans and other

suspicious characters during World War I. The eccentric woman rode a horse and carried a pistol as she led her girls up and down the beach. The girls carried shotguns and semi-automatic rifles. Her efforts caught the attention of the press. One bold headline proclaimed Stark "Leads Band Of Girl Hun Hunters."

The eccentric Stark saw enemy agents everywhere. "Although we never had any spies arrested," she wrote, "we kept a lot of them on the move."

One night, a large ship approached the beach, ringing its bell. At the same time, a car appeared on the beach. Clearly the car was there to greet the ship full of invaders. Only the sight of her heavily armed Girl Scouts averted the imagined disaster. When some men from the ship rowed ashore claiming to be grounded and looking for a telephone, Stark and her girls were there to send them on their way.

When the government decided in 1940 to expand the Navy and add more bases, including one in Mayport, they used eminent domain to

seize her land. They paid her in total \$40,000 for a property estimated to be worth \$2 million. Elizabeth Stark refused to leave. The Marines seized the Ribault Hotel. Legend says that they ultimately carried her from her home, tied to a chair and warned her to "never set foot on her property again."

The name Wonder Wood survived. Wonder Wood by the Sea was gone, but the name continued as a place name. There is a Lake Wonderwood, Wonderwood Drive, and a Wonderwood Bridge. It is a peculiar feature of the south that we often retain the name of a place long after the original purpose ceases to exist.

Elizabeth Stark died penniless in 1967. She was buried in an unmarked grave in the Mayport Cemetery. In 1975, Brownie Troop 446 headed up an effort to raise funds for a pink marble headstone to be installed at Stark's grave site.

Scott A. Grant is a local author and historian. By day, he manages assets for clients at Standfast Asset Mgmt. He welcomes your comments at scottg@standfastic.com

Business Briefs cont. from pg. 7

affected businesses prepare disaster loan applications. The network will also deploy its mobile assistance centers into communities for affected businesses to receive on-site assistance with disaster loans and other post-disaster challenges.

Preparedness resources:

For preparedness resources from the Florida SBDC Network, visit <https://floridasbdc.org/services/consulting/preparedness/>.

The 2023 Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday is Aug. 26 – Sept. 8.

For more information, visit <https://floridarevenue.com/disasterprep>.

www.FloridaDisaster.org – The state's official source of information for individuals and businesses from the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

www.FloridaDisaster.biz – The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's website to provide businesses access to critical information before, during, and after a disaster.

For a hurricane preparedness checklist and other resources from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), visit www.sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business/prepare-emergencies.

For more information about the Florida SBDC at UNF and to find an SBDC near you, visit www.sbdc.unf.

Champs in The Hamps to be held Aug. 11

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

In an effort to support and foster athletic excellence, the Nease Golden Panther Boosters will host its annual gala on Friday, Aug. 11 at St. Johns Country Club. The event will have a nautical theme and will start at 6 p.m. Attendees are encouraged to wear nautical-themed attire. Tickets are \$75 a person and can be purchased at www.neaseathletics.com. Tables can also be purchased for \$850, which includes 10 tickets and signage at the table and in the event program. The ticket price includes a three-course meal, photo booth, DJ, and other fundraising games.

Funds raised will support the Nease Golden Panther Booster Club and its endeavors. All proceeds from ticket sales, sponsorships, and donations will directly benefit the athletic association, enabling them to provide enhanced training facilities, coaching resources, and other needs for all the athletic sports at the high school.

“The annual Gala is one of our largest fundraising events,” said Nease Golden Panther Booster President Tammie McClafferty. “We thank our business sponsors who partner with Nease by providing

silent and live auction items. The funds raised from this event are used to enhance our athletic facilities for all the athletes who attend Nease High School.”

Attendees can participate in a silent and live auction where trips, jewelry, and Nease parking spots will be available. Other games will be available, where attendees will have exciting prizes up for grabs. Generous donations from local businesses and community members will contribute to the fundraising efforts, making it a win-win for all involved.

“The success of our annual gala relies heavily on the support and participation of the local community. Volunteers will play a vital role in organizing and managing the event, ensuring its smooth local businesses can contribute by becoming event sponsors or donating prizes or items for the silent and live auction,” McClafferty said.

Those interested in becoming a sponsor or contributing a silent auction item should call Meridith Strout at (904) 562-0564. Champs in the Hamps is more than just a fundraising event; it is a rallying cry for the community to unite, celebrate athleticism, and invest in the dreams of aspiring athletes.

Family fun in bloom at Ocean Palms

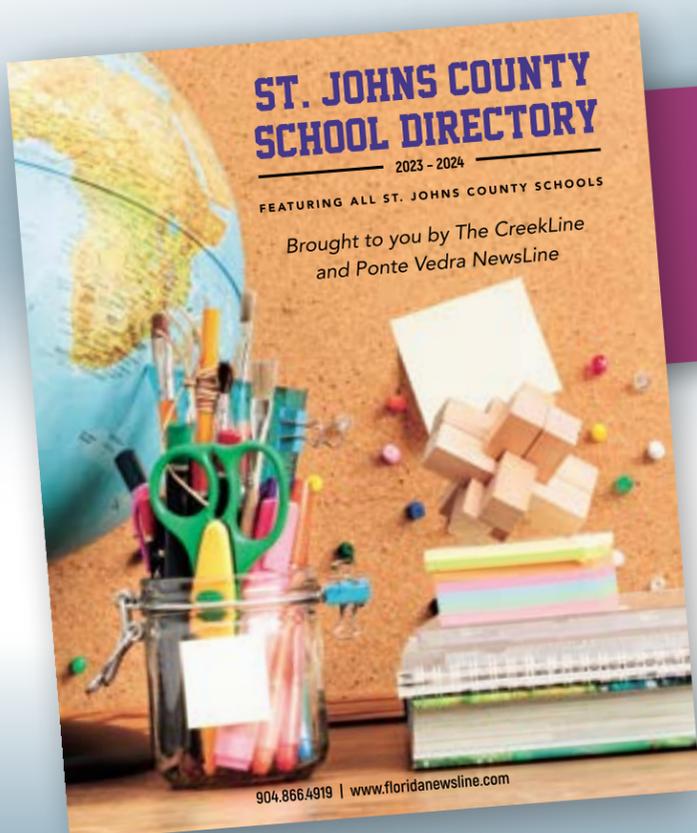


Photo courtesy Lisa Farese
Students, families and staff members at Ocean Palms celebrated community at the school's Spring Family Fun Night. Laughter filled the air as students raced in hamster balls, played human foosball, faced off in the game truck, challenged themselves in the bungee run, and had their faces painted. Also, anyone up to the challenge could attempt to water balloon teachers and administration.

Coming in August!

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The Pantry Raiders

Chicken fingers make picnics fun

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

Fried chicken long has been a popular picnic menu item, but other chicken dishes can fill in for this staple quite easily. For example, this recipe for “Sesame Chicken Fingers with Honey Dip” can be enjoyed by kids and adults on a picnic or even at casual events at home. This recipe, from “125 Best Chicken Recipes” (Robert Rose) by Rose Murray, features a sweet honey dip, but other dips can complement the meal as well.

Sesame Chicken Fingers with Honey Dip

Serves 4

- 1/3 cup light mayonnaise
- 3 tbsp. liquid honey
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 cup dry bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp. sesame seeds
- 1 tsp. dried Italian herb seasoning
- 1 lb. skinless boneless chicken breasts cut into fingers, 2 inches long by 1/2-inch wide

together the 1/3 cup mayonnaise, honey and 1 tablespoon lemon juice until well combined. Refrigerate if making ahead.

2. In a small bowl, combine the 1/4 cup mayonnaise, Dijon mustard and 2 tablespoons lemon juice.

3. On waxed paper or in a shallow bowl, combine the bread crumbs, sesame seeds and Italian seasoning.

4. Coat chicken with mayonnaise mixture, then with bread crumb mixture. Place on prepared cookie sheet. Bake in preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown and the chicken is no longer pink inside, turning once. Serve hot with the honey dip and potato wedges, if desired.



Photo courtesy MetroCreative
Sesame Chicken Fingers with Honey Dip.

1. Honey Dip: In a small bowl, stir

High school facilities open to public on Wednesdays

By NewsLine Staff
mail@floridanewsline.com

In an effort to promote community health and well-being this summer, the St. Johns County School District will open its high school facilities to the public on select Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. Outdoor facilities at Allen D. Nease, Bartram Trail, Beachside, Creekside, Pedro Menendez, Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine and Toco Creek high schools will be open the following dates and times.

Wednesday, July 12, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Wednesday, July 19, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Wednesday, July 26, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Access to the tennis courts, track, and outdoor basketball courts will be allowed. Access will not be provided to the gymnasiums, stadium fields, batting cages, baseball fields, softball fields, or multi-purpose fields. The facilities will not be open to any organized practices, games or sport-sponsored, fee-based training and pets are not permitted. All campuses will be locked at 8 p.m. and all St. Johns County School Board Policies will apply.

Dog approved new Splash Zone



Photo courtesy K9s for Warriors

On June 9, K9s for Warriors beat the heat and turned on more than 20 waterspouts at the grand opening of K9s For Warriors' new Richard and Lynn Dickinson Splash Zone at the Davis Family Mega Kennel in Ponte Vedra. The Splash Zone holds approximately 1,200 gallons of water and is opening just in time for the dog days of summer.

“Considering these difficult and challenging times, we find great benefit from living here. This was a terrific decision and we’re glad we did it!”



John, Resident at Westminster St. Augustine

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Travel

Beautiful Bali: Rice Terraces and Temples

By Debi Lander
mail@floridanewslines.com

Most people imagine Bali as an exotic and enchanting paradise with emerald-green terraced rice fields, gorgeous sandy beaches, and volcanic peaks. I can affirm that the magical, lush landscape lives up to the dream, but getting to the isle is a seemingly endless series of flights. But, worth the time!

Bali, Indonesia, is known as the Island of the Gods for its multitude of temples. Hundreds of temples, shrines, and monumental decorative gates lie scattered throughout Bali's cities, villages, and countryside. Some are ancient, some covered in moss, and others decorated with flowers.

Ninety percent of the Balinese are Hindu, and this architectural style remains an essential component of the culture. Every village also maintains a main temple, a large ceremonial and gathering pavilion, and a drum tower to call the residents. And each family compound has an outdoor family temple.

Art and craftsmanship are highly valued and practiced on the island. Entire villages frequently produce a particular art form, such as woodcarving, stone cutting, jewelry making, drawing and painting, basketry, weaving, and

textiles. Extended families, often three generations, work together, the youngest learning from their elders. At an art gallery, I watched the patriarch bent over a complex pen and ink scene, the son painting with watercolors, and the youngest working with acrylic paints. While the arts are evolving, the communal environment nourishes the talent.

Water is critical to life on the island for Bali's iconic rice fields. They use a thousand-year-old system to keep the supply available when and where needed. Each farm belongs to a local water-sharing association, and each chapter's head works out a planting schedule so farmers can flood and drain the rice fields at precise stages of the growing cycle.

The verdant and artistically shaped rice terraces attract tourists and lots of photographers. Here again, the communal spirit is at work. While standing above the fields provides a majestic sight, just looking earns a few tourist dollars. The community-based tourism association wisely built swings, zip lines, photo ops, restrooms, and snack huts. Visitors buy tickets to interact with nature while having fun and bring income to the area. I purchased my ticket for a ride on a giant swing soaring over the



Photos courtesy Debi Lander
Swinging over rice terraces.

rice paddies — a moment I won't forget. I wish I'd had time to trek among the terraces (another paying tourist option.)

Many women in my group were quilters interested in learning about batik fabric. We took a class at a family-owned batik shop where we dipped a cloth into dye, scrunched it, drizzled on a different color dye, and then sprinkled it with ash to create a marbling effect. The second process involved placing a copper template into hot wax and stamping it on the fabric to transfer a design. Afterward, the cloth is re-dyed, the paraffin is boiled off, and beautiful printed material appears.

I also wandered through the Sacred Monkey Forest Sanctuary, a lush jungle with gigantic Banyan trees. About 1,000 monkeys roam free, the babies mischie-

vously frolicking.

Bali ranks high for wellness and yoga retreats; spa treatments come at bargain prices. I stayed busy participating in a water purification ritual and visiting the picturesque lake temple on Mount Batur's caldera. I also took a cooking class, learning to make a spicy salad and satay with ground chicken cooked on a grill.

I lodged in a colorful boutique hotel in Ubud, the cultural and artistic heart. Then I moved to a luxury beach resort hotel in Nusa Dua. I left the magical island too soon but hope to return someday.

I purchased the tour from Craftours.com and highly recommend it.

Visit www.bylandersea.com to read more of local travel writer Debi Lander's stories and travel tips.



Artist at work.



Ubud temple.



Lake temple.



Beach at resort hotel.

Nutrition Check

Did you know July is National Picnic Month?

By Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RD and Rayonna Hills BS
mail@floridanewsline.com

I have fond memories from my childhood sitting on an open blanket and munching down on some snacks my parents packed at the park. There is a lot of value in creating happiness and peace at mealtimes and a picnic is just the way to do it! Going beyond setting the table or sitting in front of a screen, get outdoors and enjoy the sounds, smells, and atmosphere.

How do I do this?

Well, the good news is that a picnic can be anywhere, anytime. You can have a picnic at the park, in your backyard, at the zoo or even the beach. This picnic can be for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or even a late-night dessert picnic. This is especially helpful if you have children or a family, as adding a change in the scenery can go a long way in terms of eating a healthful meal.

What should I pack?

A picnic can either be served as a full-balanced meal (e.g. protein and grain; sandwich; leftovers) or as a charcuterie board (vegetables, fruit, protein, crackers etc.). The options are limitless, I recommend

aiming to think outside of the box and add something new that isn't in your normal routine — let's face it, you likely do not eat picnic style very often, so why should the food be the same? Visit www.eatingwell.com/recipes/19926/holidays-occasions/occasions/picnics/ as it provides a lot of fun ideas that you can add to your menu.

Beyond just what you're going to eat, think about other outdoor activities that you could add to your mealtime. This is an ideal opportunity to have family bonding and/or physical activity added to your day. You can pack items such as board games, sports equipment, or even make your own I-spy scavenger hunt pages, depending on your picnic location.

All in all, the goal is to get outdoors, enjoy nature, and think outside the box on when, where and how we develop a positive relationship with food and family. Enjoy!

Kristen Hicks-Roof PhD, RDN, LDN, CLC, FAND is an assistant professor in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Brooks College of Health, University of North Florida.

Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Club awards annual \$2,500 scholarship



Photo courtesy Jennifer Logue

University of North Florida Director of Annual Giving Kristy Herrington stopped by the Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach June 15 to thank the club for its annual \$2,500 scholarship. The Service Above Self scholarship goes to a student in public administration or related major who plans to work in the nonprofit sector. Pictured are Kristy Herrington (center) with Ponte Vedra Beach Foundation Rotarians Ashley Dopf and Billy Wagner.

Vicar's Landing Boutique Sale on summer hiatus



Photo courtesy Beverly Webb

The Vicar's Landing Boutique Cottage sales staff sported their new sale day attire at the recent June 6 sale. Pictured are Mary Ann Stone and Mary Lane Johnson (seated), Beverly Webb, Audrey Dearborn, Ken O'Hara, Sandra Burnaman (standing). The monthly Vicar's Landing Boutique sales will resume Aug. 1, 2023. For information, call Mary Lane Johnson at (904) 612-9277 or Beverly Webb at (904) 315-2610.



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